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COUNTRY Czechoslovakia

REPORT

SUBJECT Communist Party Activity in the
Faculty of Medicine at Charles
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REPORT

COUNTRY Czechoslovakia

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SUBJECT Communist Party Activity in the Faculty of
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Communist Party Activity in the Faculty of Medicine at Charles University, Prague.

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Explanation of Specialized Expressions

An "Institute" of the Faculty of Medicine is a staff of professors and their assistants, all of whom teach and perform research in the same scientific field. The "theoretical institutes" of the Faculty are those giving instruction in the basic subjects (such as chemistry, biology, and physiology) which are common to all branches of medical and dental practice and which are required of all first and second year students regardless of their future specialization. Students in the third or higher year do most of their work in "clinical institutes" where they have an opportunity to apply their knowledge in the hospital and laboratory.

A "Chair" (katedra) is a group of Institutes having similar interests. The Chief and Secretary of the katedra, which corresponds approximately to an academic department in an American university, coordinate the work of the member institutes and provide the channel of communication to and from the Office of the Dean of the Faculty (dekanat). The dekanat is in turn subordinate to the Office of the Rector of the University (rektorat), and both Rector and Dean are responsible to the Minister of Education and Culture, Dr. Frantisek KAHUDA.

The academic titles in use in the Faculty of Medicine are professor, docent, odborny asistent, and asistent. Since the last of these is found only infrequently, no attempt has been made to distinguish between odborny asistent and asistent, both being translated here as "Assistant Professor" or simply "Assistant".

The common expression kadrove oddeleni is often found rendered as "political department", "cadres department", or "personnel department". Since the organization in this particular case was very small but quite distinct from the personnel department, the translation "Special Political Unit" seemed most appropriate.

Party Organization

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two basic party organizations existed within the Faculty of Medicine at Charles University in Prague. One of these was composed of Communists who worked in certain of the clinical institutes of the Faculty. The other basic party organization drew its members from the personnel of the theoretical institutes and of certain other institutes which were ordinarily regarded as "clinical" but which were grouped together with the theoretical institutes for Party organizational purposes. (See Table 1.)

between eighty and one hundred persons

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usually attended the plenum meetings of the basic party organization for the theoretical institutes. Among these [redacted] the Dean of the Faculty of Medicine and a number of his administrative assistants, indicating that some if not all of the personnel of the Dean's office (dekanat) were affiliated with the basic party organization for the theoretical institutes. [redacted]

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[redacted] the two units were entirely independent of one another. It was generally rumored, however, that the Communist organization in the clinical institutes was somewhat larger and more active than the one in the theoretical institutes.

The leadership of the [redacted] basic party organization consisted of a Chairman (predseda stranické organizace) and a Committee (vybor) composed of eight to ten members. These officials were elected for a one-year term, beginning in January. Plenum meetings were held once a month in the main lecture hall of the Physiological Institute, where the Chairman and the Committee members sat in a row on the podium, facing the rank-and-file who were ranged around the amphitheater. A small group of from fifteen to twenty-five activists customarily participated in the discussions and transacted all the business at these meetings.

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Ideological Indoctrination

All Party members were supposed to participate in political education sessions. [redacted]

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the membership of the basic party organization for the theoretical institutes was divided into ten groups for political education purposes, each group consisting of from eight to ten KSC members plus one or two non-Party people who were present by invitation.

[redacted] KSC members were constantly exhorted to play a leading role in the work of the Faculty of Medicine [redacted]

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[redacted] the topics they were given to discuss in plenum meetings and political education sessions were largely irrelevant to the problems of academic life. The Party seemed to shrink from coming to grips with practical questions like the admittedly poor scholastic preparation of new students or the inadequate laboratory and reference facilities. Instead, the leaders contrived to invent "issues", the solution of which contributed little toward the accomplishment of the University's educational mission. Typical examples of recurring Party programs were: "Increase contacts with the Union of Czechoslovak Youth!" (Ceskoslovenský Svaz Mladěge - CSM) and "Strengthen the organization of the Revolutionary Trade Union Movement!" (Revoluční Odborové Hnutí - ROH).

Much time was also devoted to studying the history of the Russian Revolution and the Soviet experience in agricultural collectivization, subjects [redacted] found to be of singularly little benefit to a Czech professor of medical chemistry. It is not only foolish but actually wasteful of time and talent [redacted] to insist that mature physicians and scientific researchers subscribe enthusiastically and incessantly to resolutions like:

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"I will strive to economize State funds by prescribing fewer unnecessary drugs", and "I will not use so much electricity in my laboratory next year". In neglecting the serious and important problems of research and pedagogy while dashing off in shrill pursuit of goals which are marginal or spurious, the Party increases its psychological isolation from the majority of the teachers and students of the Faculty. It also betrays the essential shallowness of its professed dedication to the causes of science and education.

Political Personalities

Docent TRAVNICEK (fnu) became Dean of the Faculty of Medicine in 1955 or 1956. Ever since, the Dean has played a double role, being not only the Faculty's administrative head but also its outstanding Communist personality. Although he held no function in the basic party organization for the theoretical institutes, Travnicek is generally believed to occupy some higher Party office.

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Travnicek was standing only one person removed to the right of President NOVOTNY in the reviewing stand for the 1958 May Day parade. Since such an honor would hardly have been accorded to the Dean of a medical school in his academic capacity alone, Travnicek's placement in the official lineup on this occasion was an indication of his importance in the Party.

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The second most influential Party figure is Professor FUCIK (fnu). Although Fucik is the titular head of one of the clinical institutes, his most important duties are those connected with his position as prorektor. It would be misleading to translate this title as "Vice Rector", since the impression would thereby be created that Fucik ranks next after the Rector of the University and ahead of the Dean of a Faculty. Actually, Fucik has much less authority than Dean Travnicek, and his function as prorektor consists of maintaining political liaison between the University administration and the Faculty of Medicine. He divides his time between rektorat and dekanat, maintaining an office in both places. It is probable that Fucik was given the title prorektor to distinguish him from the two prodekan, or Vice-Deans, REBEIS (fnu) and RESJEK (fnu), whose duties are scholarly rather than political. Fucik is also a Deputy to the Czechoslovak National Assembly.

The third most powerful Communist in the Faculty of Medicine is MARBALKOVA (fnu), a woman graduate engineer. As the more important of the two Secretaries of the dekanat, Marbalkova acts as the Dean's general overseer and "whip", maintaining constant supervision and control over all programs except research and studies. (Student matters are handled by the other Secretary, Doctor of Jurisprudence DUFFEK (fnu).) Marbalkova's husband (nu) is rumored to hold an important Party post elsewhere. He is not a member of the Faculty of Medicine.

two other individuals, in addition to Dean Travnicek, occupy Party office at a higher level than that of the basic party organization.

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One is RASKOVA (fnu), woman Professor of Pharmacology and Chief of the Pharmacological Institute of the Pediatrics Faculty. [redacted]

The other person is Dr. KLIKA (fnu), Assistant of the Histological Institute and Chairman of the entire ROH organization for the theoretical institutes. [redacted]

[redacted] Klika has some higher Party function because, though well-known as an activist, Klika was rarely seen at meetings of the basic party organization for the theoretical institutes, to which they both belonged.

Other prominent personalities of the basic party organization for the theoretical institutes [redacted]

[redacted] were the following:

Dr. BILEK (fnu), Assistant of the Physiological Institute. Bilek left the Faculty of Medicine in or about 1954 and is now believed to hold an important post in the Ministry of Education and Culture.

Drs. SOBEK (fnu), NEDVED (fnu), and TUCEK (fnu), all Assistants of the Institute of Medical Physics. These men, who were Doctors of Natural Sciences rather than Doctors of Medicine, left the Faculty of Medicine for an unknown destination sometime during the period 1954-55. Because of the secrecy surrounding their departure, [redacted] they may have undertaken research work of a classified nature, possibly in the field of nuclear physics. Sobek was Chairman of the basic party organization in 1953, and all three men were known as earnest communists.

Dr. STARK (fnu), Assistant of the Biological Institute. [redacted] Stark had probably been chairman of the basic party organization in 1954 [redacted]

Dr. Maximilian WENKE, Assistant (now Docent) of the Institute of Pharmacology of the Faculty of General Medicine.

Dr. MYSLIVECEK (fnu), Assistant (now Docent) of the Physiological Institute.

Dr. VANECEK (fnu), Assistant (now Docent) of the Second Institute of Pathological Anatomy.

Dr. KRAUS (fnu), Assistant of either the Histological or Embryological Institute.

Dr. Stiran JOHN, Assistant (now Docent) of the Microbiological Institute. John was chairman of the basic party organization in 1955.

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[redacted] Professor Karel KACL, the head of the First Institute of Medical Chemistry [redacted] is a Deputy to the National Assembly for the fellow-traveling Czechoslovak Socialist Party (Ceskoslovenska strana socialisticka - CSP)

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Placement and Promotion of Party Activists

[redacted] it was common knowledge that the Faculty of Medicine has proportionately fewer KSC members than any of the other Faculties of Charles University in Prague. For example, prior to [redacted]

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1958 there was not a single active communist in either the First or Second Institute of Medical Chemistry. This situation was the cause of considerable displeasure to Dean Travnicek and to his superiors in the University administration and in the Ministry, as evidenced by their public statements and actions over the last several years.

Because of the lack of politically qualified candidates, no Assistant of either the First or Second Institute of Medical Chemistry was ever promoted to docent during the source's entire six years of association with the Second Institute. The man regarded by his colleagues as most deserving of promotion was Assistant HOFMAN (fm) of the First Institute. A non-controversial individual

[redacted] Hofman had been associated with Charles University for about twenty-five years. He had amassed a small but respectable body of research work - better, in the source's opinion, than that offered by some of the Party careerists who have been promoted in recent years.

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[redacted] in 1952, Hofman was already being spoken of as a logical choice for docent, and his name was formally proposed on a number of subsequent occasions. Invariably, the request was rejected by the dekanat on the pretext that Hofman's lectures were poorly prepared and not clearly understood by the students.

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[redacted] these alleged deficiencies had no basis in fact, and Hofman's nomination was rejected because he was not politically active. Thus, the First and Second Institutes of Medical Chemistry, between them, have operated for six years or longer with a staff of from thirteen to fifteen assistants, three full professors, and no docents. Presumably the Faculty administration

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[redacted] in the spring of 1956 [redacted] on Assistant named VOREL (fm) joined the First Institute of Medical Chemistry. Vorel was generally believed to be a KSC member

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[redacted] However, his attitude was so non-political that his non-communist colleagues treated him as one of themselves and had no hesitation in speaking their minds freely in his presence without fear of damnation.

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is content to allow this anomalous situation to continue for as long as may be required to reconstruct the political orientation of these two Institutes along more favorable lines.

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In sum, [redacted] not [redacted] a single instance in the last two or three years in which an Assistant of the Faculty of Medicine who was not an active communist was promoted to the rank of docent. It is clearly the basic policy of the Faculty administration to fill all the associate professorships with hard-working KSC members who will then be in a position to be promoted to the full professorships in charge of the various Institutes as soon as the incumbents retire.

[redacted] while the Party has been willing enough to compromise academic standards by promoting second-raters, it has not yet gone to the extreme of removing good professors who are non-communists in order to make room for deserving Party members. Nor has it resorted to the expedient of promoting persons who can be counted as communists for statistical purposes even though their enthusiasm for the Party is lukewarm at best. [redacted]

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[redacted] Fence-sitters and time-servers within the KSC ranks are given little or no preferential treatment by comparison with their non-communist colleagues. Since Dean Travnicek and his associates have encountered evident difficulty in finding a sufficient number of earnest communists who are also reasonably competent teachers of medicine, the process of communizing the Faculty of Medicine by the promotion-retirement method alone promises to be steady but slow.

Disciplinary Measures

The incident of [redacted] successful "resignation" from the Party, [redacted] illustrates the confusion which prevailed among the Czechoslovak Communist leaders during the period following Khrushchev's dramatic disclosures at the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. It also shows that KSC has continued, at least until fairly recently, to experience indigestion from the presence in its ranks of incompatible elements assimilated during the mass membership drive conducted in 1948, after the KSC gained power.

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[redacted] When the Social Democratic Party (Ceskoslovenska socialni demokracie) was absorbed by the KSC on June 27, 1948, all the personnel of the Hradec Kralove medical faculty [redacted] became the targets of an indiscriminate recruitment campaign by the local communist authorities.

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In or about 1954, there occurred certain personnel changes in the Faculty of Medicine which resulted in a temporary easing of the source's position. Dr. Bilak left the University for the Ministry of Education and Culture, and Dr. Sobek, the Assistant of the Institute of Medical Physics who was chairman of the basic party organization for the theoretical institutes, also accepted another post elsewhere. Professor PROSEK (Gua) was replaced as Dean of the Faculty of Medicine by Professor HLAZEK (Gua), who had been the chief of one of the clinical institutes.

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Cadre Morale

[redacted] the events of the Twentieth Party Congress of the CPSU continued to cause dismay and confusion in the ranks of the KSC for about a year and a half. Then, the launching of the first Soviet earth satellite in the fall of 1957 gave a much-needed boost to the morale of the Czechoslovak cadres, who interpreted the Russian scientific achievement as proof that they were still on the winning side in the East-West struggle.

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The Sputnik launchings also wrought a noticeable change in the behavior of the staff of the Special Political Unit (kadrove oddeleni) attached to the Dean's Office (dekanat) of the Faculty of Medicine. Here, as in every other

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factory, enterprise, or educational institution in Czechoslovakia, the Special Political Unit, functioning as a security records and liaison office, is a key instrument of communist control. The two officials who staffed the Special Political Unit in the Faculty of Medicine, because they were relatively uneducated and unskilled men with working-class backgrounds, contrasted rather sharply with the highly qualified professional people whose political dossiers they maintained. Thus, in addition to the unpopularity which the nature of their work inevitably entailed, these particular Party functionaries suffered from feelings of social inferiority and also - especially during the "thaw" period - from a real fear of being thrown out of their jobs. Their sense of insecurity was quite apparent, and a perceptive outsider could interpret the state of the morale of these officials as a sensitive barometer of political change.

After February, 1956, and prior to the fall of 1957, the staff of the Special Political Unit seemed to be trying to work both sides of the street. On the one hand, they had to maintain sufficient "socialist vigilance" to satisfy their superiors in the Party command; on the other hand, however, they were generally careful to maintain a polite and at times even an obsequious attitude toward non-communist physicians and professors who might some day be in a position to demand that they be fired. Once the Sputniks were in orbit, these officials also regained their sense of omnipotence, and their attitude toward their "clients" toughened correspondingly.

In the spring of 1958, reports of a cistka, or general housecleaning of suspected anti-regime elements, were current in Prague.

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several cases of non-communist professional people, including two distinguished chemists, who were dismissed from their positions during the first half of the year.

Rumor had it that the cistka would progress gradually throughout Charles University, accomplishing its mission in one Faculty after another. However, the "housecleaning" of the Faculty of Medicine, supposedly scheduled for the summer of 1958, had not materialized.

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the drive had lost much of its momentum by that time. Nevertheless, the general trend of events in post-Sputnik Czechoslovakia had the KSC in the process of regaining its nerve and muscle, and that the outlook could only be poor.

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TABLE 1.

Jurisdiction of the Basic Party Organization for the
Theoretical Institutes of the Faculty of Medicine of
Charles University in Prague.

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Theoretical Institutes:

1. Institute of Medical Physics
2. First Institute of Medical Chemistry
3. Second Institute of Medical Chemistry
4. Institute of Anatomy
5. Institute of Embryology
6. Institute of Histology
7. Institute of Physiology
8. Institute of General Biology

Other Institutes Affiliated with this Basic Party Organization:

9. Institute of Microbiology
10. Institute of Experimental Pathology
11. Institute of Pharmacology
12. First Institute of Pathological Anatomy
13. Second Institute of Pathological Anatomy

Notes: a) The Dean (dekan) of the Faculty of Medicine and some or all of the administrative personnel of the Dean's office (dekanat) were members of this basic party organization.

- b) The foregoing list of Institutes is not all-inclusive.

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